

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (D-IL) joined fellow co-sponsors in the White House Rose Garden as President Barack Obama signed the Civil Rights Oral History Project into law. The underlying bill – H.R. 586 – establishes a national program to collect and preserve the personal stories of individuals who were involved in the American Civil Rights movement. The project will continue ongoing efforts to document this critical period by collecting audio and video recordings and making these first-hand testimonials available to the public. H.R. 586 is the first of Quigley's co-sponsored bills to be signed into law.

"My children learned in school about the sacrifices of well-known leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and [co-sponsor] Congressman John Lewis. This important project will give voice to those whose stories haven't been told, and preserve them for future generations to appreciate and remember," said Quigley. "I am humbled to stand here today as our first African-American President signs this meaningful bill into law. The Civil Rights movement was marked by senseless discrimination and courageous determination, but more importantly, reminds us that change is possible and equality is non-negotiable."

The Civil Rights Oral History Project of 2009 initiates a new partnership between the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Library of Congress to catalog the eyewitness stories surrounding the racially-charged struggles that took place between 1954–1968. The collection of video, audio, visual, and written materials will be made available to the public and also used to encourage and assist local efforts with the same intent. The bill was sponsored by Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY) and passed out of the House and Senate unanimously last month.